

Battle Local Action Plan Review 2011

Introduction by Councillor Richard Jessop, Battle Town Council

Back in 2007 all Battle residents were invited to contribute towards formulating a local plan for the town. This culminated in the Battle Local Action Plan document being produced. This has been a very important publication as it has been the basis for prioritising construction projects, improvements to bus services, providing facilities for our youth, renovation projects in the Memorial Halls, enhancements to the environment, increased safety and many other benefits which were then undertaken by the community at large and the Town Council. It also enabled grants to be obtained to help fund these projects. A full list and where grants were obtained from is listed later in this document.

As in many areas of life, time move on. So must we to ensure that our Plan is still relevant to today's circumstances and the wishes of our residents. It has been time to review it.

Posted to all households in the Battle area, a new questionnaire requested residents to respond to questions relating to our town and what you wanted to see, what you felt was working well and what you thought could be improved.

The responses were encouraging!

A draft of this Revised Plan was then presented to my colleagues on the Action Plan Steering Group and this document is now the result. It has confirmed that traffic and parking is still the main issue affecting the town but has also shown us that we should now be trying to help with affordable housing, maintaining our shops, disability access and cycling route provision along with many other facilities.

This Plan is now our 'blue print' for making more improvements to the vicinity for the benefit of us all. Being up-to-date, it gives credence to our bids for further grants to bring to fruition some of these aspirations.

Please take the time to read through this booklet. If you would like more information about it then contact our Steering Group Chairman whose contact details are listed at the back. If you would like to actually become involved and join the Group, you will be welcomed. It is only through residents becoming Champions for individual projects that they get completed. This is our local version of the Big Society!

Richard J Jessop
Town Councillor

THE BATTLE TOWN LOCAL ACTION PLAN – REVISED 2011

PART 1 – THE BACKGROUND

WHY HAVE A LOCAL ACTION PLAN?

We believe that the residents of Battle know enough about our area to have an understanding of what is needed for the town and what improvements could be sought. To bring this knowledge together, a small group produced a questionnaire and from the responses received produced the first Battle Local Action Plan in 2007. This provided guidance to a Steering Group of local residents, organisations and of Battle Town Councillors and aimed them in the most beneficial direction to achieve improvements to the area.

Many projects are too costly for the town to fund alone. Grants can often be gained from other sources such as the District Council, the Battle Partnership, the WARR Partnership and others. Each of these bodies requires proof of the support behind the projects. The best way of showing this has been a Local Action Plan.

WHAT WAS ASKED FOR IN THE FIRST ACTION PLAN?

There were various categories and these were:

1. Community Support
2. The Environment
3. Transport
4. Economic Factors
5. Battle Town Council

Within each the main items identified were:

Community Support

- 1.1 Enhancement of the recreation and sports grounds facilities
- 1.2 Provision of car parking at the recreation ground
- 1.3 Provision of a swimming pool
- 1.4 Improvements to the Memorial Halls
- 1.5 Provision of a community hall in Netherfield
- 1.6 Provide Community Drop-in and Day Care facilities
- 1.7 Improve facilities for young people
- 1.8 Retention of public toilets in Battle

The Environment

- 2.1 Reduce petty crime and improve the perception of safety in Battle
- 2.2 Seek continuity of police staffing
- 2.3 Improve the appearance of Market Square and encourage its use
- 2.4 Improve recycling of waste
- 2.5 Improve the town's footways and pavements
- 2.6 Maintain footpaths in good order
- 2.7 Reduce dog fouling

Transport

- 3.1 Improvement of traffic management in the town centre

- 3.2 More effectively enforce parking restrictions along the High Street
- 3.3 Discourage heavy traffic from using the High Street
- 3.4 Reduction in speed through the town
- 3.5 Development of a cycle path network
- 3.6 Encourage young people to walk / cycle to school
- 3.7 Improve bus service to the Conquest Hospital
- 3.8 Improve public transport services between Netherfield and Battle
- 3.9 Increase parking provision in the town
- 3.10 Reduce the cost of parking

Economic Factors

- 4.1 Improve the town's appearance
- 4.2 Promote local businesses and employment opportunities
- 4.3 Encourage developing the town as a visitor destination

The Town Council

- 5.1 Improve communication with our residents.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE FIRST LOCAL ACTION PLAN

Community Support

A climbing forest has been installed in the North Trade Road recreation ground. This £30,000 project was funded by Battle Town Council together with a grant of £15,000 from Rother District Council.

A new car park has been provided in the same park for 33 cars. The main materials are made from recycled plastic and it is designed not to generate large quantities of rain water run off. This £50,000 project was also funded by Battle Town Council and had a grant of £20,000 from Rother District Council.

A Multi Use Games Area has been provided in the recreation ground funded by £15,000 from Rother District Council and £15,000 from Battle Town Council.

The Memorial Hall has had new roofing, improvements to the rear area, and many other updating items undertaken including improved seating.

A new skate park has been provided in the youth centre at the top of the High Street and a new kitchen provided within it.

The public toilets in the Mount Street car park have been retained.

The Environment

The Mayor holds regular meetings with the Chief Inspector of the Police where issues of concern are raised. The local officers attend the monthly full Town Council meetings and respond to any questions. They also provide monthly reports of their activities and are visible around the town.

Beautiful Battle has worked well around the Market Square for the last few years but have pulled back for the moment until the ownership of the supermarket is resolved. The Square is regularly used for markets and for health screening.

Following lobbying for increased recycling, Rother is now collecting cardboard in with the garden waste.

The footpath running from Western Avenue to the cricket ground has been re-graded and surfaced to allow its easier use.

Dog fouling has been targeted by requiring dogs to be kept on leads in the parks and council owned land following the passing of Bye laws.

Transport

Traffic calming measures have been introduced in Netherfield, North Trade Road, the High Street and a new roundabout installed at the junction of Lower Lake and Powdermill Lane.

The police are issuing more parking violation tickets than when only the Traffic Wardens were monitoring the situation of poor parking.

Additional buses are now running between Battle and the surrounding area to the Conquest Hospital following representations.

Economic Factors

The visual attractiveness of the town has been improved by the addition of floral arrangements all around the town which have been provided or maintained by Beautiful Battle. Shop keepers have joined in by placing displays on their shop facades and by sponsoring individual planting boxes and beds.

The Chamber of Commerce has set up a High Street Group which is actively working on enhancing the shopping experiences for residents and visitors alike to the town.

The Chamber also runs regular functions such as the Marbles Championship on Good Friday, the Mediaeval Fayre at Whitson and, either by Beautiful Battle or a joint effort by the Town Council and the Chamber, a Scarecrow Festival in July. Each of these activities brings people and business to the town.

This last year, Battle Town Council has been working with the Planning Department of Rother District Council on producing an accurate document on the attributes to be used, and the difficulties being faced by the town to enable a realistic Local Development Framework document to be published by Rother District Council in due course. This will form the basis upon which new developments - both residential and economic - will be considered for their suitability. The Town Council's work has resulted in a specific Battle Town Study being produced by Rother leading to accurate information in their Core Document.

Moves have been made to try to encourage English Heritage, as managers of the Battle Abbey, to join in the town's activities to boost visitors to the town as a whole as well as to the Abbey.

The Town Council

The Council Members and staff have undertaken training to enable the Council to become a Quality Council and so entitle it to access funding to which it previously was not able to do.

The Council is now also producing a newsheet which is delivered to virtually all residential properties in the Battle area communicating what the council is doing and advising residents of who their local councillors are together with their contact details and general news items.

THE RESPONSES ARISING FROM THE RECENT QUESTIONNAIRE

A total of 256 questionnaires were returned. The full analysis of the responses is contained in Appendix A.

As the revision questionnaire was simpler and shorter than the first one undertaken, this report needs to be read in conjunction with the initial document as not all areas were covered second time around.

PART 2 – WHAT THE CONSULTATION PROCESS REVEALED

2.1 Introduction

This part of the BLAP looks more closely at the residents concerns and aspirations as revealed by the questionnaire responses. As BLAP is mainly a documented Plan for the residents of the town only their responses are considered in this update.

2.2 COMMUNITY SUPPORT

OBJECTIVES

Social cohesion is important for the well being of communities. The old adage, 'Those that play together, stay together,' still holds true. In this case play will include general support - not just the provision of recreational areas.

Objective – To enhance the Community Sporting Facilities

Following the improvements to the North Trade Road recreation ground with a new parking area for 33 vehicles, a Climbing Forest, new play equipment for children, a new path suitable for the disabled and the funding being found for the new Multi Use Games Area, an impressive 77% of respondents are noted to be satisfied with the current facilities. However, more still needs to be done.

Provision of a Swimming Pool. This item was highlighted in the original Plan and still is outstanding. The need for an indoor pool was the most requested item in the new set of responses and covered all age groups.

Action: The demand for an indoor heated swimming pool for Battle cannot be doubted. A **Water Champion** needs to be identified to progress the idea, develop a plan and identify sources of funding.

Creation of Cycle Paths. There is a need identified for cycle paths both for recreational use away from other road vehicles and for the students of Claverham College to get to and from the College for their daily commute.

Action: Both for health and for safety reasons a new set of cycle paths have been identified as necessary in and around the town. A **Cycling Champion** needs to be identified to progress the concept; identify realistic routes, identify funding sources and obtain consents from any landowners affected.

Provision of a Leisure Centre and Games Area. Many responses sought some form of centre for sports whether they be indoor or on an outdoor area. It may well be regarded as beneficial to separate the indoor from the outdoor sports to enable some early gains and also to widen the choices of location.

Action: Many residents have stated that they would appreciate additional sports facilities such as badminton, bowls, petanque and croquet, amongst others. A **Sports Champion** needs to be identified to consider locations, funding sources, the commercial viability and which sports could be obtained initially.

Provision and Maintenance of Youth Facilities. There is considerable concern that youth services may suffer in the current austere financial climate. The existing services and buildings need to be maintained as well as additional play equipment provided in areas away from the well provided for North Trade Road recreation ground.

Action: Further consultation needs to be undertaken to fully comprehend the needs of the local youth and to find the highest priorities to be addressed. This consultation should include each of the existing youth clubs, guides and scouting movements and sports clubs. Discussions with the local schools to see which additional facilities may become available should also be considered. **Battle Town Council and members of the BLAP Steering Group** should work together to complete this further consultation and then develop a plan to be implemented where practical and achievable.

Objective – Continue to Enhance the Community Halls

Almost 50% of respondents felt that the Battle Memorial Halls satisfied their needs against only 6% who did not. The modernising work that the Halls Committee have undertaken since the first Action Plan was published has clearly been successful. However, certain issues have been raised which, in time, could be considered, such as better seating (which is currently being addressed), producing more live shows and films being shown more regularly.

In respect of Netherfield, better use of the school facilities was noted as necessary for the public out of school hours.

Action: The good work being undertaken should continue at the Memorial Halls. However, there still appears to be a need for a community hall better situated to allow the residents of Netherfield to have the same opportunities as the people of Battle town. As before, a **Community Hall Champion** needs to be encouraged to emerge from Netherfield to develop the need identified for a hall better situated than the Village Hall.

Objective – Healthcare Matters

Two areas of interest have been identified for this subject. Firstly, over 87% of respondents were content with the local doctors' availability and 54% were satisfied with the improved travel arrangements to The Conquest Hospital following the increase in bus services to the hospital identified as needed in the first Action Plan. However, and secondly, a weekend surgery of some kind was identified as needed and improved later afternoon and weekend travel by public transport to The Conquest was sought.

Action: Bearing in mind that the Health Service in general is in a state of flux, and for the need to keep aware of the changes happening and to have influence on those changes, it is recommended that the Steering Group seek a **Healthcare Champion** to co-ordinate the responses of the residents to any proposals coming from the health professionals and the authorities to ensure that Battle residents have their voices heard. That champion should also endeavour to seek additional bus services and, at the least, a Saturday Surgery.

Objective – Provide more Affordable Housing

In the main, residents of Battle believe that there is already sufficient housing provision in the town (67% of respondents) – certainly with the Blackfriars development still a strong possibility. A recent series of meetings with Rother District Council's Planning officials and Battle Town Council Members concluded that it would be wrong to increase the housing provision in any large way without the infrastructure needs – primarily of better traffic management – being addressed first. There was a need identified at Netherfield for more affordable housing where 50% of all new housing provision was suggested as being appropriate.

Action: Currently housing provision is dictated by developers wanting to build in the best places and Rother District Council's need to respond to Planning Applications made. This may change with the detail of the new Localisation Bill awaited when local neighbourhoods may be able to decide applications locally. So, at the moment, little can be done in promoting affordable housing by the Steering Group other than by lobbying. It is suggested that a watchful eye is maintained on the developments occurring in the Planning field and opportunities taken as they present themselves.

Objective – Ensure that Public Toilets are Retained in Battle

Currently there are two sets of toilet facilities in the town, one is in the Market Square and the other is in Mount Street Car Park. These provide much needed conveniences and need to be retained.

Action: Discussions must continue with Rother District Council on the retention of these important public facilities. Both visitors and locals have expressed their desire to have them available. It is noted that where a town is a visitor destination these become even more important.

Battle Town Council should also strive to find ways in which they can facilitate the provision of public conveniences close to the Abbey Green.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Objectives

There are some objectives that could be achieved to improve the living environment for the people of Battle. These could be gained by addressing the concerns expressed by way of the following items.

Objective - Reduce Petty Crime and Improve the Perception Of Safety.

The police have recently undertaken a review of the services that they provide to ensure that the standards are retained or improved as far as possible within their budgetary constraints. This has included the reduction of the opening hours of the Battle Police Station but with the provision of a telephone line to a central point which can deal with concerns raised and the ability to send out officers as necessary. This new arrangement has received the most responses from the residents who are concerned about the reduced hours. Clearly, a period of this new regime needs to be allowed to see if the fears are justified or otherwise. The other issues raised by residents were that of visible police patrols being made and of more evening and weekend policing presence being available. The police have, however, stressed that the Battle Station will continue to be fully manned and the local Chief Inspector holds regular meetings with the Chairman of Battle Town Council to discuss all matters of local importance.

Unruly behaviour of either local people or those visiting, say, the local public houses from elsewhere, was raised as an issue that merited improved police involvement to seek a reduction in such activities. Already Battle Town Council has moved a redundant bus shelter from opposite The Chequers public house to a location by an existing bus stop elsewhere where it was really needed both to reduce the possibilities of poor behaviour and to provide a facility in North Trade Road.

Action – Battle Town Council to continue to monitor the situation and:

- Continue with the regular liaison meetings with the Chief Inspector.
- Encourage the continuation of the local police surgeries held in the town for all members of the public
- Lobby for the continuing and increased patrolling of the town in the evenings and at weekends.

Objective – Improve the Recycling of Waste

It has been noted that, since the first survey was undertaken, garden and cardboard waste is now collected by Rother District Council. However, one in three residents still felt more could be accomplished. There were two main

areas identified – those being glass and all types of plastic which could beneficially be recycled.

Also, concern was expressed about there needing to be weekly collections of domestic waste, certainly during the warmer months.

Action: The **BLAP Steering Group** should seek to increase the groups of waste collected by holding talks with Rother District Council and to press for weekly collections of kitchen waste during the warmer periods of the year.

By far the most contentious matter relating to the town - traffic management and all its associated issues - must be addressed or the feeling is that the town will lose its attractiveness to residents and visitors alike.

Objective – Improve the Town's Footways and Footpaths

In this section of the questionnaire the highest number of observations received related to the maintenance or provision of footpaths and footways. By its very nature, the High Street has to have narrow footways but the levels on the eastern side have presented problems where there are twin height kerb stones. Additionally, many parts of the town are rural and lack footways where they may be beneficially provided. Also, footpath maintenance is necessary to ensure reasonable access during periods of adverse weather or rapid growth of foliage, etc.

Additional pedestrian crossing points were noted as being sought at points close to St Mary's Church, at Station Approach, at the western end of the North Trade Road Recreation Ground and just south of Mount Street on the High Street.

Action – Monitoring of the footways and paths needs to be maintained and regular remedial action taken. Historically, a **Footpath Warden** has been reporting any issues to Battle Town Council on a regular basis and this activity should continue. His reports form the backbone of requests to **East Sussex County Council**. **Battle Ramblers** should also be invited to contribute to advise of any concerns. Where there are no footpaths or footways and a clear need is shown then steps should be taken to provide them.

As walking contributes to good health, the availability of leisure walking routes on easily understood pamphlets has begun led by **Battle Ramblers**. Encouragement should be given to these being used by both the **TIC** and the **Primary Care Trust**.

Netherfield continues to lack safe walking routes. **Darvel Down Residents Association** should be invited to identify needs in liaison with **Battle Ramblers** and work towards a solution with the relevant committee of **Battle Town Council**.

Battle Town Council should use its best endeavours to press the Highways Agency / East Sussex County Council to consider the merits of new crossing points over the roads noted above.

Other Environmental Issues

Generally, the survey indicated a good level of contentment relating to the general tidiness of the town with about 80% expressing satisfaction with its cleanliness. It was litter and dog waste left on footpaths that disappointed those who expressed the alternative view. Specifically, litter dropped in the vicinity of Claverham Community College was raised as an issue.

Action: A project leader needs to be found to identify areas where further litter bins and dog waste bins could be provided and to research possible funding sources.

TRANSPORT

2.2.1 Objective – To improve the free flow of traffic through and around the town

- 2.2.1.1 As Battle sits on two A Class roads, A271 and A2100, it suffers from many Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) passing through and around the town.
- 2.2.1.2 In 2010 Battle lost its Traffic Warden when he retired. The replacement regime was then managed by the local police on a basis of patrols being undertaken when staff were available. This has caused some dismay as no dedicated officer is now continuously walking around the town during the main enforcement hours. Concerns relating to parking enforcement have produced responses amongst the highest level of individual complaints.
- 2.2.1.3 Despite certain periods of strict enforcement, it has been observed that unrestricted parking behaviour continues rapidly once the police presence is absent.
- 2.2.1.4 In addition to the parking problems, the frequency of large vehicles coming through the town when they could be requested to pass it by when not delivering to the town's premises needs to be reduced. As these roads are A Class roads this will not be an easy exercise and expert help will be needed to address any remedial undertakings.
- 2.2.1.5 Additionally, the double parking of commercial vehicles has remained a problem in the High Street. Despite the moving of the Loading Bays to be nearer to the Co-op, poor parking has continued.

Action – Improved parking enforcement must be undertaken by the Police Authority to ensure the free flow of traffic. This will require co-operation between the Police and, in many cases, the local traders to ensure that deliveries are managed at non peak times. It may be that the **Safer Roads Group** should be encouraged to be the champions for this problem.

Consideration should be given to requesting the Highways Agency to downgrade the A2100 as it passes through the town so that restrictions can be placed upon it in respect of HGVs.

Objective – Calm Traffic Speeds

Approximately 73% of residents who had views on speeding issues felt that more needed to be done around the town to reduce the speeds attained.

Action – Discussions need to be undertaken with both the Police and the Highways Authority to investigate which locations are deserving of feasibility studies on traffic calming. If any of those studies show that schemes are needed and can be regarded as affordable then **BLAP** should campaign for those schemes to be implemented.

Objective – Develop a Cycle Path Network

A need has been demonstrated for the provision of a cycle route network around the town's rural areas as well as for specific journeys to, say, schools or places of work.

Action – A **Cycling Champion** needs to be identified to investigate suitable routes allowing for joint use with pedestrians and horse riders as needed, to confirm with any landowners that the use would be acceptable, to liaise with the highways authorities for existing pathways which might be identified as possibilities and to investigate funding and parties who could conduct the signage and general tasks involved in providing those routes.

Objective – Increase awareness of the Public Transport Services

The questionnaire responses illustrated that the publicity given to the timetable and routes of bus services could be improved (although these are available) and this may lead to better usage by residents which in turn would justify the continuing provision of the currently under used service. However, the frequency and hours available of the local buses means that buses do not allow workers to get early starts to work or late returns, e.g., to the railway station. This results in additional car journeys and other inconveniences.

Action – **BLAP** needs to seek to set up a continuing dialogue with the public transport service providers and lobby for improvements in the first and last bus journey timetables together with more frequent services to and from The Conquest Hospital and Battle Railway Station. A review of any new arrangements would also be needed to confirm their efficacy.

Objective – Tackle Battle's Parking Problems

The general lack of parking spaces for both residents and visitors to the town was highlighted by the questionnaire responses together with the high cost of parking in Rother District Council controlled car parks and the need for

permitted times to be enforced along with the enforcement of parking restrictions.

Action – Pressure needs to be applied to Rother District Council to seek, at the very least, no further increases in the cost of parking in the town which otherwise proves detrimental to the economic well being of the town's businesses and to the general vitality of the area. A **Parking Champion** should be appointed to pursue this in conjunction with the Town Council. Many respondents wished that the car parks be run by the Town Council rather than Rother and **Battle Town Council** should be encouraged in its negotiations to seek a hand over of these facilities to the Town Council for them to be run for the benefit of the town rather than the wider community.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Objective – Promote Local Business Development and Employment Opportunities

With there being difficulties in the economic outlook across the country – and Battle is no different – it is noted as being important that as much as possible is done to assist businesses to survive and grow; this is as well as seeking to maintain the level of employment locally and providing greater job opportunities. Responses from the Questionnaire strongly indicated that start up business opportunities should be encouraged, specifically in manufacturing and high tech. These, of course, tend to require new buildings and sites as well as backers will need to be found.

Action – **Battle Town Council**, in conjunction with Rother District Council, need to identify sites suitable for new build or conversions to accommodate manufacturing and high tech start ups. Being in a rural area, a craft type centre could be considered which could blend in with the historic nature of the town. It then has to be up to entrepreneurs to put up seed money to get the businesses started. **Battle and District Chamber of Commerce** may be able to provide assistance with this. One of the drawbacks of the area is the relatively poor transportation links, both by road and by rail, to the larger commercial areas of the south of England. It is therefore important to encourage improved internet coverage and speeds in the Battle area. A **Business Champion** should be appointed to liaise with as many business organisations as possible to sell the concept of Battle locations for business. The Battle and District Chamber of Commerce already promote the town's existing businesses by way of encouraging people into the town to see such activities as the Easter Marbles Match, the Scarecrow Festival (in conjunction with the Battle Town Council) and the Mediaeval Fayre. The Chamber has recently improved its web site with the business listings and contact details. Efforts should be continued in keeping the Tourist Information Centre in Battle to enable visitors to see the benefits of the town both as a location and as a base to visit other nearby attractions.

Objective – Improve the Town’s Appearance

The town has been very lucky to have an enthusiastic group of volunteers called Beautiful Battle who have made great improvements to the town centre with imaginative planting and general maintenance of existing beds. Battle Town Council has also excelled with its custodianship of the Almonry Gardens which has provided a haven in the town centre for visitors and residents alike. The Town Council also maintains many of the grassed areas around the town. Responses from the Questionnaire praised the efforts of all those involved in making the town as attractive as it is and many also wanting to see increased planting around the town. Litter collections are carried out daily from the town centre and generally the town is well kept. An area of concern though, is the state of some of the listed buildings within the High Street conservation area. Some are in need of redecoration and others of major restoration work.

Action – Pressure needs to be exerted upon the building owners within the conservation area to keep their properties in good order, and especially those who own empty buildings in a prominent location. Beautiful Battle should be further encouraged in their good works. The creation of town entrances (gateways) which have good design attributes, should be encouraged to strengthen the feeling of entering the built up part of the town. As these can be relatively costly, a **Town Centre Champion** should be sought to link with the Town Council in finding sponsors for the materials and to encourage their site locations, permissions and construction.

Objective – Encourage Developing the Town as a Tourist Destination.

Battle has been a destination for visiting due to its historic importance for hundreds of years. Indeed, it has, apart from the Abbey, many interesting buildings to visit, trails to walk and countryside to see along with retail expenditure opportunities. It is also a good base to have as a point from which to travel to surrounding villages and tourist attractions. There are, however, a lack of hotel beds in the immediate area with just a few smaller quality hotels and inn accommodation available. A difficulty is the lack of and high cost of parking in the town.

Action - As much publicity as possible using all means available should be attempted to extol the virtues of the town and the surrounding area. Reliance upon the Tourist Information Centre within the Battle Abbey should not be expected to promote the town – other efforts should be made. Encouragement to the existing hoteliers should be given to improve, if necessary, the quality of their accommodation. Representations should also be made to the Planning authority to allow those hotels which have sufficient ground and submit applications for increased numbers of bedrooms to be allowed to build them. A **Tourism Champion** should be appointed to encourage the publicity options.

The Town Council

Objective – To represent the wishes of the local residents to other bodies, to encourage sustainability of the town’s businesses and of its

environment, and to encourage participation in local affairs by people of the area. It should do all of this in the most efficient manner and as economically as possible.

The Town Council is proud of its heritage, its location in one of the prettiest parts of the country, its encouragement of activities locally, its representations on many of the local organisations, its involvement with other authorities and of its people who make the community as active as it is. The Council is one of the more successful in Rother in that it has a full quota of councillors and has achieved the provision of many facilities for the residents over the last few years. It is efficiently run with minimal staff and has managed to keep its precept below inflation over the recent years. However, there are major concerns which the responses within the questionnaire have highlighted and expect the Council to deal with effectively. Chiefly amongst these are the costs of parking in the town and the amount of heavy traffic through the town centre. There is the public perception that the local council, i.e., Battle Town Council, is responsible for more functions than it is allowed. Most of the concerns and complaints received at The Almonry deal with items for which the District Council or the County Council have responsibility. Indeed, there is a perception that the town is 'let down' by the higher authorities.

Action – The Town Council should continue to press for realistic parking charges which can be seen as fair by the local residents when compared to other areas in Rother. The council should press the County Highways Authority to find ways to limit the amount of heavy traffic passing through the town centre. It should also maintain its presence on outside bodies to ensure that the town's voice is heard on matters affecting its residents. The Members of the council, via their committees, should press for proper planning enforcement where actions are taken by building owners - who may appear to flout planning laws, to enable the character of the area to be maintained within both the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Town Centre Conservation Area.

It should encourage participation in local democracy by all residents and particularly it should engage with the youth of the area to encourage the next generation to become involved.